

**In the Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A guard assembly for use with a sectional garage door, the sectional garage door includes a plurality of sectional panels connected by garage door hinges, each hinge is comprised of a first hinge plate attached to one of the sectional panels with a first attachment, a second hinge plate attached to an adjoining sectional panel with a second attachment, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, the guard assembly comprising:

a first guard element comprising:

a first shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end positioned entirely between the hinge knuckle;

a first plate engagement end adapted to engage the first hinge plate; and

a first transition body portion positioned between said first shaft engagement end and said first plate engagement end; and

a second guard element comprising:

a second shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement end having a second shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said second guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a second plate engagement end adapted to engage the second hinge plate; and

a second transition body portion positioned between said second shaft engagement end and said second plate engagement end;

wherein said second guard element rotates independently from said first guard element.

2. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, wherein:  
said first shaft engagement end comprising a first engagement end width;  
said first transition body portion comprising a first transition body width;  
said second shaft engagement end comprises a second engagement end width;  
and

wherein said first engagement end width combined with said second engagement end width is equal to or less than said first transition body width.

3. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, wherein:  
said first transition body portion comprises a first transition body upper surface,  
said first transition body upper surface protruding beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft.

4. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, wherein:  
said first plate engagement end comprises a first plate engagement end upper surface; and  
said first plate engagement end upper surface protruding beyond the first hinge plate.

5. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, wherein said first transition body portion comprises a flat surface angled between said first shaft engagement upper surface and a first engagement plate upper surface.

6. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, wherein said first guard element comprises a non-abrasive material.

7. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, wherein said first guard element comprises a non-abrasive polymer.

8. (Currently Amended) A guard assembly for use with a sectional garage door, the sectional garage door includes a plurality of sectional panels connected by garage door hinges, each hinge is comprised of a first hinge plate attached to one of the sectional panels with a first attachment, a second hinge plate attached to an adjoining sectional panel with a second attachment, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, the guard assembly comprising:

a first guard element comprising:

a first shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a first plate engagement end adapted to engage the first hinge plate; and

a first transition body portion positioned between said first shaft engagement end and said first plate engagement end; and

a second guard element comprising:

a second shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement end having a second shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said second guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a second plate engagement end adapted to engage the second hinge plate; and

a second transition body portion positioned between said second shaft engagement end and said second plate engagement end;

wherein said second guard element rotates independently from said first guard element;

~~A guard assembly as described in claim 1~~, wherein said first shaft engagement end comprises a c-clamp engagement feature configured to removably engage the hinge shaft.

9. (Currently Amended) A guard assembly for use with a sectional garage door, the sectional garage door includes a plurality of sectional panels connected by garage door hinges, each hinge is comprised of a first hinge plate attached to one of the sectional panels with a first attachment, a second hinge plate attached to an adjoining sectional panel with a second attachment, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, the guard assembly comprising:

a first guard element comprising:

a first shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a first plate engagement end adapted to engage the first hinge plate; and

a first transition body portion positioned between said first shaft engagement end and said first plate engagement end;

~~A guard assembly as described in claim 1, further comprising:~~

an engagement slot formed in said first plate engagement end adapted to provide a means for the first attachment to secure the first plate engagement end to the first hinge plate; and

a second guard element comprising:

a second shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement end having a second shaft engagement upper surface

configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said second guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a second plate engagement end adapted to engage the second hinge plate; and

a second transition body portion positioned between said second shaft engagement end and said second plate engagement end;

wherein said second guard element rotates independently from said first guard element.

10. (Currently Amended) A guard assembly for use with a sectional garage door, the sectional garage door includes a plurality of sectional panels connected by garage door hinges, each hinge is comprised of a first hinge plate attached to one of the sectional panels with a first attachment, a second hinge plate attached to an adjoining sectional panel with a second attachment, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, the guard assembly comprising:

a first guard element comprising:

a first shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a first plate engagement end adapted to engage the first hinge plate; and

a first transition body portion positioned between said first shaft engagement end and said first plate engagement end;

~~A guard assembly as described in claim 1, further comprising:~~

~~an engagement element formed in said first plate engagement end, said engagement element configured to frictionally engage the first attachment; and~~

~~a second guard element comprising:~~

a second shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement end having a second shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said second guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

a second plate engagement end adapted to engage the second hinge plate; and  
a second transition body portion positioned between said second shaft engagement end and said second plate engagement end;

wherein said second guard element rotates independently from said first guard element.

11. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 1, further comprising:

an adhesive element mounted to a first plate engagement end lower surface, said adhesive element providing a means for securing said first plate engagement end to the first hinge plate.

12. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 11, further comprising:

a edifice formed on said first plate engagement end lower surface, said adhesive element positioned within said edifice.

13. (Original) A guard assembly for use with a garage door, the garage door includes a plurality of panels connected by garage door hinges, each hinge is comprised of a first hinge plate attached to one of the panels with a first attachment, a second hinge plate attached to an adjoining panel with a second attachment, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, the guard assembly comprising:

a first guard element comprising:

at least one first shaft engagement finger configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement finger having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft;

at least one first finger gap paired to and positioned adjacent said at least one first shaft engagement finger;

a first plate engagement end adapted to engage the first hinge plate; and

a first transition body portion positioned between said first shaft engagement finger and said first plate engagement end; and

a second guard element comprising:

at least one second shaft engagement finger configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement finger having a second shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said second guard element is attached to the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement finger configured to rotate within said at least one first finger gap;

at least one second finger gap paired to and positioned adjacent said at least one second shaft engagement finger, said at least one first shaft engagement finger configured to rotate within said at least one second finger gap;

a second plate engagement end adapted to engage the second hinge plate; and

a second transition body portion positioned between said second shaft engagement finger and said second plate engagement end;

wherein said second guard element rotates independently from said first guard element.

14. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 13, further comprising:

a first knuckle groove formed on said at least one first shaft engagement finger in a position below said first shaft engagement upper surface, said first knuckle groove configured to house the hinge knuckle .

15. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 13, wherein:  
said first shaft engagement finger comprising a first engagement end width;  
said first transition body portion comprising a first transition body width;  
said second shaft engagement finger comprises a second engagement end width;  
and

wherein said first engagement end width combined with said second engagement end width is equal to or less than said first transition body width.

16. (Original) A guard assembly as described in claim 13, wherein:  
said first transition body portion comprises a first transition body upper surface,  
said first transition body upper surface protruding beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft.

17. (Currently Amended) A guard assembly for use with a sectional garage door, the sectional garage door includes a plurality of sectional panels connected by garage door hinges, each hinge is comprised of a first hinge plate attached to one of the sectional panels with a first attachment, a second hinge plate attached to an adjoining sectional panel with a second attachment, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, the guard assembly comprising:

a first guard element comprising:

a first shaft engagement end configured to rotatably engage the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the



hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement end positioned entirely between the hinge knuckle;

a first plate engagement end adapted to engage the first hinge plate; and

a first transition body portion positioned between said first shaft engagement end and said first plate engagement end.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting an automobile from damage from a garage door hinge, the hinge comprised of a first hinge plate, a second hinge plate, a hinge knuckle extending upwards from the first hinge plate and the second hinge plate, and a hinge shaft mounted within the hinge knuckle, the hinge shaft rotatably joining the first hinge plate to the second hinge plate, comprising:

attaching a first guard element to the hinge by:

press-fitting a first shaft engagement ~~[[end]]~~finger into rotatable communication with the hinge shaft, said first shaft engagement ~~[[end]]~~finger having a first shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said first guard element is attached to the hinge shaft, said first guard element including at least one first finger gap paired to and positioned adjacent said first shaft engagement finger; and

mounting a first plate engagement end to the first hinge plate;

wherein a first transition body portion is positioned between said first shaft engagement ~~[[end]]~~finger and said first plate engagement end.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting an automobile from damage from a garage door hinge as described in claim ~~[[17]]~~18, further comprising:

attaching a second guard element to the hinge by:

press-fitting a second shaft engagement ~~[[end]]~~finger into rotatable communication with the hinge shaft, said second shaft engagement ~~[[end]]~~finger having a second shaft engagement upper surface configured to protrude beyond the hinge knuckle when said second guard element is attached to the hinge shaft, said second

shaft engagement finger configured to rotate within said at least one first finger gap, said first shaft engagement finger configured to rotate within a second finger gap paired to and positioned adjacent said second engagement finger; and

mounting a second plate engagement end to the second hinge plate;

wherein a second transition body portion is positioned between said second shaft engagement end and said second plate engagement end;

wherein said second guard element rotates independently from said first guard element.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting an automobile from damage from a garage door hinge as described in claim ~~[[17]]~~18, further comprising:

press-fitting said first plate engagement end into fixed attachment with said first hinge plate.